

colleagues, those who are in urban areas that are not having this problem of payment reimbursement for Medicare and Medicaid, I would wish they would not be adverse to taking a few cuts. We have taken them. But if not there, the least we can do is raise the reimbursement level to the doctors and nurses and hospitals in rural areas up to a level that will meet their expenses.

That is something that I guess we have always seen, and perhaps in my 20 years, but not too long ago we recognized that health care was spiralling out of control. We all acknowledged that we have to do something about that, and we have, in a bipartisan way. Not everything we have done has been bad. But sometimes you have unintended consequences.

Another one we have had now is dealing with home health care. We made some decisions on numbers that have had a very adverse effect on home health care delivery in rural areas. I would hope that we could change that, too.

Mr. TURNER. If the gentleman will continue to yield, Mr. Speaker, one of the other things that comes to my mind as a member of the Committee on Armed Services is the fact that all this projection about a surplus does not take into account the very serious and legitimate needs that we have for funding national defense.

I was a cosponsor of the legislation that we passed overwhelmingly in this House, and that has moved through the Senate and is now signed by the Senate, to create a national missile defense system for the United States to protect us against the growing threat of ballistic missile attack from nations like Iran, Iraq, North Korea.

Yet, there is absolutely nothing in that estimate of a surplus that would allow any funds to be spent to develop a national missile defense system.

I know the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. BERRY) is very familiar with the problems being faced by agriculture, the problems of emergency expenditures. I know the gentleman certainly would be able to enlighten us some on the pressures on agriculture and the emergency spending that invariably we have to deal with that again is not accounted for in that estimate of surplus.

Mr. BERRY. That is absolutely right, Mr. Chairman, if the gentleman will continue to yield. We not only have emergency spending we are going to have to do for agriculture this year to keep it in business.

As my colleague, the gentleman from Texas, also just mentioned, these terrible shortfalls that we have in rural hospitals and all rural health care providers, home health care, all these things are creating a desperate situation in rural America.

We also had this shortfall in the way we pay the men and women that fight for this country and serve in our Armed Forces.

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It is absolutely unconscionable that we would put them in a situation where they are putting their lives on the line every day, and, at the same time, they have to worry about whether or not their families back home are being taken care of. They know that their families are living below the poverty level, and we should not, a great Nation that we are, ask our men and women in uniform to make a sacrifice like that at the same time we are asking them to protect us.

All of these things just do not make any sense, and we know that we are going to eventually have to deal with them, and we should make allowances for that in how we spend our money and allocate our monies in this country.

Mr. STENHOLM. Mr. Speaker, the light of this conversation now between the three of us, if we were conducting a town hall meeting in the 17th District of Texas, someone would be just itching to stand up and say, "Yep, there you go. You are already talking about spending. That is why we need the tax cut so you will not spend it." To which my response is pretty simple: "If you do not believe that necessary spending on defense is a prudent expenditure of your dollars, you are right."

But last time I checked, one of the most important responsibilities that this Congress has is to maintain the national defense because, without a strong America, all of these other arguments will pale.

Mr. TURNER. Mr. Speaker, I know the gentleman from Texas and the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. BERRY) have heard from our veterans. At many of our town meetings, I have heard veterans come and talk to me about the problems they have experienced in getting veterans care because of some of the reductions that have already been put in place.

Mr. STENHOLM. Mr. Speaker, what I say to that constituent of mine, okay, what we are saying in the Blue Dog budget, we are prepared to make the tough decisions and squeeze the budgets. We will work with our colleagues on both sides of the aisle to get the most fiscally responsible budget that we can possibly get. We submit that we have got one, and it has been proposed. I am sure that now that we are through this little exercise of the tax cut to the exclusion of everything else that we will get serious about this, and my colleagues will find that they will not find a more fiscally responsible budget that can get 218 votes than the one that we proposed 6 months ago.

Mr. TURNER. Mr. Speaker, I am very confident that, if we can bring both sides of this House together and get them down to the table, that we could come up with a plan that would look very much like the plan that the Blue Dog Democrats proposed months ago, which was, as the gentleman says, a balanced budget and one that took care

of the legitimate needs that we face in this country.

One of the interesting subjects that I have heard the gentleman address before that I want to ask him about is the impact of a \$794 billion tax cut that the President is going to veto here in just a few days. What that would do, not just on the short term, but the next 10 years, which is what we have been talking about, but what would happen in the out years if we were to take such an action as reducing taxes by that much when we do not even have a surplus to do it from.

Mr. STENHOLM. Mr. Speaker, that was the thing I was talking about a moment ago, which is why I call this the most fiscally irresponsible action because it is back-end loaded. We have had a little flury. I am not sure everybody in the country has seen this, but we had some folks in the other body suggest the way to get through this cap business is to increase by 1 month the number of months in a year. Apparently, they did it with a straight face.

Now, back home, folks would be laughing about that. But I thought for a moment that, well, maybe that is a good way to see how serious the Y2K problem is if we could just postpone it for 30 days. We can see what is going to happen in there. But that is what some folks have seriously talked about doing. Well, that is not a good way to do business.

The debt, \$5.6 trillion, that is what we owe. We owe. The tax cut, \$792 billion is projected, but they back-end loaded it. Instead of front-end loading, instead of moving spending, some are suggesting now let us spend it in the next 2 weeks because then it will not count against the caps next year. They conveniently overlook that spending is spending, and that is still going to come out of Social Security Trust Fund. Make no mistake about it. One cannot disguise the real numbers no matter how we debate it on the floor of the House.

But that tax cut literally explodes by \$4.5 trillion from 2011 to 2020 in its effect on the drain of the Treasury which some people honestly want to do. They believe that is good policy. We tried that in the 1980s, and we participated. We were going to squeeze the revenue and balance the budget, and we borrowed \$4 trillion trying out that little experiment. I do not want to do that.

Now, I am not going to be around the Congress in 2014, but I do not want the actions that we take or do not take this year to put that burden on the 2014 Congress.

The gentleman from Texas (Mr. TURNER) is young enough, he is probably going to be here. The gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. BERRY) is young enough, he is probably going to be here. But I am not going to be in the Congress in 2014, I do not believe for a moment. Why would we do that? That is why we have taken as strong a position as we have on the Social Security question, which is separate, but very important.